

ANTECEDENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL
COMMITMENT AMONG ENGINEERS AT TENAGA
NASIONAL BERHAD

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the main challenge faced by organisations is to maintain their employees' commitment in their current business environment. Some of the employees, especially skilled employees like engineers, are willingly changing jobs. This is often due to low organisational commitment. As such, this study examines antecedents of organisational commitment among engineers at Tenaga Nasional Berhad. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to determine the types of commitment among engineers' in the organisation, (2) to study the levels of engineers' participation in organisational decision-making, (3) to find out the levels of engineers' job satisfaction in the organisation, (4) to examine the levels of engineers' job characteristics in the organisation, (5) to identify the levels of engineers' religious commitment in the organisation and (6) to investigate the relationships between participative decision-making, job satisfaction, job characteristics and religious commitment with organisational commitment. Data were collected from 336 engineers from four regions in Peninsula Malaysia, namely North, South, East and West, using stratified random sampling procedure. These four regions were divided to represent four states which run three TNB's core businesses, which are generation, transmission and distribution. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to answer the objectives and to test the hypotheses of the study. Five general hypotheses were developed based on the Social Exchange Theory. All of the hypotheses predicted that there are positive relationship between organisational commitment with participative decision-making, job satisfaction, job characteristics and religious commitment. The results show that all the independent variables were considered as among the factors that were related or contributed to organisational commitment. It was also found that although the levels of job satisfaction among the engineers were much lower than other independent variables, they still remained in the organisation. It was also found that religious commitment was positively related to normative commitment.

ملخص البحث

أهم التحديات التي تواجهها المؤسسات في هذه الأيام هو إبقاء روح الالتزام بالعمل والقناعة بطبيعة المهنة الحالية لدى موظفيها. فبعض الموظفين وخاصة المهرة منهم كالمهندسين يفضلون التنقل في مكان العمل، وما ذلك إلا بسبب قلة الالتزام بالمؤسسة. لهذا تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تدرس الخلفيات السابقة في الالتزام بالعمل لدى عينة من المهندسين في شركة الكهرباء الوطنية بماليزيا (Tenaga Nasional Berhad) والهدف من ذلك يتجلى في الأمور الآتية: 1) معرفة نوع الالتزام بالعمل لدى أولئك المهندسين. 2) دراسة مدى مشاركة المهندسين في وضع القرارات المؤسسة. 3) الاطلاع على مستوى الرضا بالوظيفة في تلك المؤسسة. 4) التعرف على خصائص عمل المهندسين في المؤسسة. 5) استكشاف مستوى الالتزام بالدين لدى الموظفين في المؤسسة. 6) التحقق من مدى العلاقة القائمة بين المشاركة في وضع القرار، والرضا بالعمل، وخصائص العمل، والالتزام بالدين، وبين الالتزام بالعمل. جُمعت البيانات من عينة تتكون من 336 مهندساً يعملون في أربع مناطق، وهي الشمال والجنوب والشرق والغرب من شبه جزيرة ماليزيا وتم اختيار العينة بطريقة عشوائية. وهذه المناطق الأربعة تمثلها أربع ولايات فيها شركة الكهرباء الوطنية التي تقوم بأهم أعمالها الأساسية الثلاثة، وهي توليد الكهرباء، وتحويلها، ثم توزيعها. وقد أُستخدم المنهج الوصفي والاستنتاج الإحصائي للإجابة على أسئلة البحث والتحقق من فرضيات البحث. وقد وضعت خمس فرضيات أساسية بناء على نظرية التبادل الاجتماعي، وكل هذه الفرضيات تتنبأ بأن هناك علاقة إيجابية بين الالتزام بالعمل، وبين المشاركة في وضع القرار، والرضا بالعمل، وخصائص العمل، والالتزام بالدين. وتشير النتائج بأن كل المتغيرات المستقلة كانت من العوامل المؤثرة في قضية الالتزام بالعمل، كما كشفت أن رغم تدني درجة الرضا لدى العينة مقارنة بدرجة بقية المتغيرات المستقلة إلا أن العينة بقيت مستمرة في عملها، وكشفت الدراسة أن الالتزام بالدين له تأثير إيجابي في الالتزام المعياري.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background of the study, statement of the research problem and objectives of the study. This chapter also outlines the significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In any highly competitive job market, there are several factors that contribute to employees' decision to remain with their current or present organisation. The managers, job satisfaction, organisational culture, organisational and occupational commitment, for example, are among the factors that may impact employees' decision to stay or leave the respective organisation. Employee turnover has received considerable attention from many quarters including senior management, human resource professionals and industrial psychologists. It is said that employee turnover is costly and poses as a challenge for human resource management (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Ponnu and Chuah (2010) argue that the cost of high staff turnover is substantial as it involves not only the direct financial cost of replacing staff, but also other repercussions, such as the potential loss of key skills, knowledge and experience, disruption to operation and negative effect on morale.

Generally, it has been found that most organisations secure their employees' loyalty by guaranteeing them with job security. Employee loyalty provides many benefits to organisations because it has been found that loyal employees are willing to

work more than what is expected by management (Mowday, Porta & Steers, 1982). Unfortunately, because of certain competitive pressures emanating from local or international sources, the management may need to restructure their organisation by taking measures such as downsizing and transforming. Employees may be both asset and liability to an organisation. A significant amount of investment is allocated for each employee as they may incur cost involved in locating, recruiting, and training, let alone salaries, healthcare plans and bonuses. Due to these financial commitments, the organisation must continually find ways on how to convince and maintain their employees' commitment in the current business environment. Otherwise, the organization may suffer from low return of investment.

Losing good workers who do their jobs well and are productive may be a great loss to an organisation. Sustaining a pool of productive workers requires organisational commitment on performance goal setting, continuous review to screen good workers from bad ones and provide additional training and support to those who can be developed or rehabilitated.

It is argued that the resources invested in an employee who chooses to leave the organisation represents a substantial and varying degree of loss to the organisation based on his/her position, skills and experience. For instance, replacing senior managers or highly technical employees carries a greater cost than replacing non-technical or clerical employees (Morrison, 2008). In their study on the importance of management style in labour retention, Taplin and Winterton (2007) found that constantly seeking replacement workers was seen by management as a necessary cost of business that was alterable. They assumed that most firms faced the same problem, and that these problems were somehow beyond managerial control.

In Malaysia, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) has put a strong emphasis on ensuring continuous learning and development for its employees. In 2009, the Group's staff costs represented about 10% of the total operating expenses. In the same year, the staff costs registered an increase of 6.8% to RM2,591.1 million, in comparison to RM2,426.8 million recorded in 2009 (TNB Annual Report, 2010).

In addition to that, a total of RM87 million had also been spent to cater to training expenses, and as a result 80% of TNB employees attended a minimum of 3 training days required to be completed by all employees every year (TNB Annual Report, 2010).

Given the readiness of organisations to allocate such financial commitment, it is acknowledged that most organisations looked upon their employees as one of their most valuable resources. Competent and dependable employees are often thought of as strong assets and good returns of investment to organisations. Thus, replacing employees for any reason is not only a significant operational and financial loss, but it may also eventually change the organisational culture (Satava, 2003; Shaw, et al., 2005).

For decades, studies of organisational commitment have often centered on job satisfaction, job characteristics and participative decision-making (Pearson & Duffy, 1999; Tjosvold, 1998; Jones, 1997). It has been found that employees with stronger commitment to their company would work harder, perform better, miss less scheduled work days and generally exhibit increased-citizenship behaviours (Donoghue & Castle, 2009). Researchers have also demonstrated that commitment (attachment) is one of the defining experiences of being human; whereas, the opposite, alienation, has consistently been associated with unhealthy conditions and behaviours (Gifford, Zammuto, & Goodman, 2002). It is clear therefore, organisations have placed great

emphasis on the creation of work environment that fosters higher levels of organisational commitment.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Lacking employee commitment or loyalty is one of the main problems faced by most Malaysian organisations. Surveys done by the Malaysian Employee Federation (2002) and National Productivity Centre (2001), for instance, indicate that many organisations face shortage of skilled employees due to their constant practice of changing employers. This is arguably the result of low organisational commitment.

As for this study, the locality is TNB and the sample of the study are TNB engineers. TNB is the largest electricity utility company in Malaysia with more than RM69.8 billion assets. A total of 1,911 TNB engineers are working in its three divisions throughout the four regions in Peninsular Malaysia - namely North Region, Central Region, East Region and South Region. In 2008, it employed approximately 29,210 people to serve a customer base of over seven million in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah.

TNB engineers are considered as skilled employees. They are well-educated, have a strong preference for independence and hold a large part of the organisation's intellectual capital. However, it is said that engineers are more committed to their profession or career rather than to their organisations (Meyer & Lynne, 2001; Periasamy, 2002; Adler & Corson, 2003). According to Hewitt Associate's 2007 Total Compensation Management Survey (as cited in Kuean, Kaur & Wong, 2010), the average employee turnover rate in Malaysia is 18%. It is also learned that at least half of the engineers that are trained for highly responsible positions in the industry have no intention of maintaining such roles for more than four or five years (Johnson &

Sargeant, 1998). The lack of appropriate motivation may have resulted in a higher rate of turnover among the engineers than among non-professionals (Goldberg & Shenav, 1984; Miller, 1986; Petroni, 2000).

A few reasons have been put forward in the literature in relation to turnover. Some of the employers are generally more concerned about having a steady turnover of staff. Some managerial quarters fail to satisfy engineers' orientations and expectations as they want to be treated as professionals. Finally, engineers' dissatisfaction is related to the under-utilisation of technical professionals.

As a public-listed organisation, TNB has globally and regionally enjoyed a reputation of outstanding performance. It is the only Malaysian energy company to rank among the top 50 energy companies in Asia in 2006 (Platt, 2007).

Organisational commitment has a significant effect on employees' behaviour and is highly correlated with their turnover (Ponnu & Chuah, 2010). It is argued that employees will start considering other alternatives once they have an intention to leave the organisation. They might leave the organisation if they find better opportunities. Ponnu and Chuah (2010) claim that even if the opportunities are unavailable or unattractive, unsatisfied employees would still have emotional or mental indication to withdraw from their companies.

It could be argued that the most crucial part for TNB in the service industry is to deliver satisfactory outcomes to its customers. If the customers are not satisfied with the quality of service, they will turn to other alternatives. Even the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Mohd Najib bin Abdul Razak has stressed that TNB's challenge is to fulfill the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) pertaining to the supply of adequate electricity and energy at a high rate of reliability (www.malaysia-chronicle.com). To him, adequate electricity does not apply to domestics consumers alone, but to

industrial users such as in the sophisticated electrical and electronic fields where a slight disruption can result in huge losses. Though it is clear that TNB is unlikely to receive any competitor soon, it does not mean that its customers would be loyal forever. In fact, TNB needs to develop a better understanding of their customers' needs. Therefore, the company needs efficient and loyal employees to make sure that they are able to fulfill their customers' expectations.

However, different management may face different employee dissatisfaction in the organisation. Thus, before implementing any appropriate ways to satisfy employees' expectations or to maintain their loyalty in the organisation, TNB must first determine what factors might contribute to dissatisfaction among their employees. Therefore, this research aims to explore the antecedents of organisational commitment among TNB engineers in Malaysia.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective

The general objective of this study to explore the antecedents of organisational commitment among engineers at Tenaga Nasional Berhad.

Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. determine the types of commitment among engineers in the organisation.
2. study the levels of engineers' participation in organisational decision-making.
3. identify the levels of engineers' job satisfaction in the organisation.

4. examine the levels of engineers' job characteristics in the organisation.
5. identify the levels of engineers' religious commitment in the organisation;
and
6. investigate the relationships between participative decision-making, job satisfaction, job characteristics, and religious commitment with organisational commitment.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study may be viewed in terms of the contributions of the findings to both theory and practice. Theoretically, this study offers a refinement or expansion of previous findings. Previously, most studies focused on factors such as job satisfaction, participative decision-making, and job characteristics, but few studies looked at religiosity on organisational commitment, especially in the Malaysian context. This study includes religious commitment as a new variable in understanding organisational commitment. Apart from that, the model of the three component conceptualisation for organisational commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1991) is applied in the study as it has become a dominant model for studies on workplace commitment.

The study would also contribute to the body of knowledge by extending and further strengthening Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1964). One framework that is grounded in the social exchange theory is the 'psychological contract', which involves individual perception of the mutual obligation that exists between employees and employer. In this situation, employees reciprocate their employer based on the extent to which they perceive their employer has fulfilled his obligations to them.

This study provides an understanding about the antecedents which are related to organisational commitment. For instance, employees with longer tenures would normally tend to understand their working environment and stay with the organisation longer. An organisation will also tend to lose employees who have little sense of commitment or loyalty.

In order to regain commitment from their employees, managers may need to recognise the changing attitudes that employees have towards the organisation. They may need to adjust certain approaches in managing the employees. To achieve greater employee commitment, the organisation must focus on the individuals from the beginning. New and radical changes occurring in any organisation will lead to lower levels of commitment. Thus, employees should be involved in organisation activities through participation, development and motivation.

Apart from that, having employees with high level of religious commitment would also benefit the organisation. This is because these employees will view their work not as an end in itself, but as a means to foster personal growth and social relations (Abbas & Abdullah, 2008; Karim, 2008).

Additionally, the findings of this study may also provide an avenue to gauge employees' perception of commitment, communication, career advancement, job tasks and workplace environment in order to gain greater insights into the level of organisational commitment. Besides, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on factors that are related to organisational commitment among TNB engineers.

Employees who want to remain or belong to a respective organisation (affective commitment) might be more likely than those who need to belong (continuance

commitment) or feel obliged to belong (normative commitment) to make an effort on behalf of the organisation .

Several studies which have reported positive correlations between commitment and performance mainly use affective commitment for their measurements (Clarke, 2006; Suliman & Lles, 2000; Zabid, Sambasivan & Juliana, 2003). There are also possibilities that an obligation to remain in an organisation will result in an obligation to contribute, and that normative commitment would also correlate positively with effort and performance.

Continuance commitment is perhaps least likely to correlate positively with performance outcomes. In his study on commitment and network performance in United Kingdom's health care units, Clarke (2006) found that continuance commitment was negatively related to network performance and the relationship between commitment and performance within networks was certainly not straight forward. In other words, employees whose tenure in the organisation is based primarily on need, may see little reason to do more than is required to maintain their membership in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Therefore, this study will provide a better understanding of the employees' perceptions and attitudes towards their organisational commitment.

Naturally, when people receive some benefits from another person or group, they would feel obligated to reciprocate by providing some benefits in return. This is applicable to employees too; when they feel they have benefited from their employer's discretionary and benevolent actions, they will often feel obligated to repay the favour.

Another significance of the study is that it provides us with the latest information on whether TNB satisfies their engineers' needs and demands. The

satisfaction could be fulfilled by providing reasonable salary, creating open downward and upward communication, and convenient working environment.

As a world-class organisation, TNB should be concerned with the standard of professionalism in the workforce. It must ensure that the company has capable and professional workforce to meet their goals. In other words, TNB needs to determine that their engineers are equipped with competencies that would meet business requirements and raise organisational efficiency and productivity. However, to provide reliable and efficient services, the company needs to retain good and committed employees. As such, TNB has to make proper adjustments to meet their employees' demands.

In summary, the study will assist the researcher to determine whether TNB engineers receive favourable treatment from their management, and whether they respond through greater loyalty to the organisation by performing behaviours that would in turn benefit the organisation.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is restricted to obtaining data through self-administered survey questionnaires. The main objective is to study the antecedents of organisational commitment among engineers at TNB. The study involved TNB engineers from several departments in Bangsar and respective branches in Peninsular Malaysia.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of terms are as follows: